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## MY PUBLIC LIFE, BY PRESIDENT GARFIELD.

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DIRECTLY after the nomination of General Garfield for the Presidency, it was arranged between him and me that I should write a life of him, to be published by the Messrs. Harper & Brothers. I had then been on intimate terms with the General for all of seventeen years, during nearly the whole of which time I had been gathering material for a biography of him, to be written at some subsequent period ; but when I set about the actual writing of the book, I found that my work would be greatly facilitated if it had his active help and supervision. Accordingly, I went to his home at Mentor, Ohio, submitted to him the proofs of what I had already written, and secured from him such additional facts as seemed to be necessary. These facts he communicated to me orally, in the presence of a stenographer, who took down his every word as it was uttered. The substance of a part of what he then dictated—but not the whole—was incorporated into the life that I wrote ; but it is thought that an exact report of all that he said may be of interest to the public. It is consequently here given, in his own language, and without any alteration from the colloquial style in which it was delivered. The only change I have felt at liberty to make in the stenographic report, has been the striking out of some of the questions by which I led him upon different branches of his subject.

EDMUND KIRKE.

### I.

#### CONGRESSIONAL CAREER.

When I went into Congress the war was still raging. I wanted to go back into the army. After Rosecrans's removal, Thomas, who was a very dear friend of mine, was exceedingly anxious to have me come back, and tendered me in a private letter the command of an army corps if I would go. He had become the head of the whole army, you know. I very much wanted to go back, but Mr. Lincoln made a personal point [of my taking my seat in the House of Representatives]. In the first place, he said that the Republican majority in Congress was very small, and there was great doubt whether we could certainly carry the necessary measures ; and in the next place, he was greatly lacking in men of military experience in the House, to regulate the legisla-

tion about the army. So I went in, and was immediately put upon the Military Committee.

In time of peace Ways and Means and Appropriations are the most important of the committees, and the Military is rather a decoration than an influential committee. But in the war the Military Committee was 'way up above any others in importance, and my position on it, as practically acquainted with the wants of the army, called me into immediate requisition, giving me a prominence in the House in the beginning that I could not possibly have had in any other way. The first speech I made was on the 26th of January, 1864, on a bill for the confiscation of rebel property. There are portions of that which you will probably think it best to print, enough, at least, to show the swing of my mind, and the character of my speaking. I was the youngest member in either branch of Congress at that time, as I had been the youngest member of the Ohio Legislature, and the youngest Brigadier General in the army. That speech is probably an exhibition of what I was when I got there, and it shows my growth at that time.

Then immediately followed the great war legislation—the question was whether we should continue the work of offering large bounties, and getting bounty-jumpers and poor fellows. When they were passing a bill to offer more bounties, I voted alone on the ayes and noes against it, to the amazement of everybody who wanted to be friendly with the soldiers. The reason I assigned was that the policy was ruinous, would not get us more men, and would simply cost us money. In a crisis like that, I said, the nation had a right to the service of its children; and it had a right, therefore, and it was its duty by the strong arm of the law and the draft, to put just as many citizens into the field as it needed. A few months afterwards, when the bounty system actually broke down, the whole Congress came to my view.

In the course of that Congress I made a speech in favor of a draft law. We were in a desperate strait. It was a very solemn moment. Mr. Lincoln came to the Committee, and told us, what we did not dare to tell the House, that in so many months, not far ahead, the term of 380,000 men would expire. The army was about three-quarters of a million, and the term of enlistment of nearly one-half—say, forty per cent.—would expire in about a hundred days. "Now," he said, "unless I can replace those men, we not only cannot push this Rebellion, but we cannot even stand

where we are ; Sherman will have to come back from Atlanta, and McClellan retire from the Peninsula ; and I ask you to give me power to fill the ranks.”

His Republican friends expostulated with him ; said that it was right on the eve of his re-election, and that the country would not stand it ; that men who had already paid large sums in bounties, to get men to serve in their stead,—and to raise the quotas of different places,—would not now submit to be drafted ; that it would raise a storm and tempest, and the Democracy would carry the country. Mr. Lincoln raised himself up to his full height, as he answered : “ It is not necessary for me to be re-elected ; but it is necessary that I should put down this Rebellion. Give me that law, and I will put it down before my successor takes his seat.”

Thereupon we took a bill for a draft into the House, and it was defeated two to one—all the Democrats and enough of our people to make a two-thirds opposition voted it down. I moved to reconsider the vote, and made a speech, which has never been printed in pamphlet form, but can be found in the *Congressional Globe*, sometime in the Thirty-eighth Congress—I think in the month of July, 1864. In it I said to the House that, in my judgment, they had voted to abandon the contest and give up the Union ; and I went on to show them how they were doing it.

Question.—“ Did you carry the draft law on this reconsideration ? ”

Answer.—We carried the draft law on that reconsideration ; and Lincoln drafted for 500,000 men.

Question.—“ Then it was in consequence of your motion that the law was carried ? ”

Answer.—I can't take the entire credit of it, because General Schenck was the Chairman of the Committee ; but I stood in the breach, and made a large number whose re-election was then pending furious. They feared that if they voted for it they might have to face an angry constituency. I made myself then somewhat unpopular by a rather reckless defiance of opinion in the House, so determined was I to see the thing through successfully. I could not see how men could value their political lives a moment in such a crisis. After a debate of several weeks the draft was carried ; and the former law, which permitted commutation in money instead of service under the draft, was repealed by a vote of one hundred to fifty.

After my vote and speech against the bounty law, I received a petition, signed by a number of prominent persons in my district, demanding my resignation, and withdrawing their confidence from me because I had gone against the soldiers and the bounty. I replied to them that I had acted according to my best judgment of the needs of the country, was sorry that it did not agree with theirs, but as between their opinion and my own, I was compelled to follow my own, and I expected to live till they confessed to me that I was right and they were wrong. Before many years I had letters from every signer of that petition expressing regret that he had signed it, and saying he then saw I was right.

The Rebellion was just dying when the Thirty-eighth Congress expired, on the 4th of March, 1865. When the Thirty-ninth Congress assembled in December, 1865, the Speaker of the House [Colfax] came to me, and asked if I had any request to make about the make-up of the committees; and I surprised him by saying that I had one, and that was that I might be left off the Military Committee. The war was over, but it was still an immense committee, because the war had to be settled, the army reorganized, rank adjusted, and all that sort of thing. It was considered as by all odds the post affording the most brilliant opportunity.

“Well,” he said, “that is the most remarkable request I ever heard; but if you don’t want the post, there are dozens back from the war who do? What do you want?”

I said, “I would like to go on a committee where I can study finance. That is soon to be the great question in this country.”

I went on the Ways and Means just when we were beginning to handle those great dry questions of detail about tariff, taxation, currency, and the public debt, and I then laid myself out to study very thoroughly the history of English finance during the Napoleonic wars. I went over the speeches and the writers of that time, and then traced the subject through our own Revolutionary time, Hamilton’s time, and Jackson’s time until I had made a very thorough study of it, taking copious notes of what I read as I went along. I kept very quiet for a time while studying these subjects, but, at last, in 1866, I broke ground with a speech in favor of returning to specie payments.

About that time the Committee of Ways and Means was divided into three committees—Ways and Means proper, Appropriations,

and Banking and Currency, and I was appointed Chairman of the Committee on Banking and Currency. The great currency struggle—the beginning of Greenbackism, or rather of inflation—came then. It was while I was Chairman of that Committee that the “Black Friday” occurred—the great gold panic. The House directed my Committee to investigate it, and I went to New York to see if I could set forces to work to grapple with those gold gamblers, and get hold of the conspiracy. When I thought I had mastered the elements, I returned to Washington, and summoned man by man the witnesses I wanted, took their testimony, and wrote the report myself.

In the next Congress, I was made Chairman of the Committee of Appropriations, and I held that for four years. All the expenditures of the Government are passed upon by that Committee. On the subject of appropriations I made a speech, in 1872, entitled “Revenues and Expenditures,” which, whatever I may say about it myself, others said was the first interesting speech that was ever made on that subject. That is, I made what they call in Parliament a “budget speech,” in which I gave the philosophy of expenditures and appropriations, and forecasted, among other things, at what time in our history we could reach a peace level of expenditures—at what time we could get down so low that we could not get any lower, and the natural growth of the country would require a rise again; and in forecasting the time I took an immense risk in saying that “at a certain period, so far ahead, it will be found that we shall touch bottom on the scale of reduction, and at that time we shall probably get our interest down to *such* a figure, and, thereupon and thereafter, the growth of the country will make the peace-increase, starting up again, necessary.” The period I fixed was about the end of 1876. I wrote an article in the *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* about a year ago on appropriations [No. 271, June, 1879]. In that I quote a passage from this speech, and compare it with the facts to show how near I came to being correct. It was so accurate as to be almost startling. The only difference was it came about a year later than the time I had fixed; the figures were almost identical. I made this discovery as the result of an immense induction of reading, that the expenditures of a war could not be reduced so as to strike a peace level until a period after the war twice the length of the war itself. I showed that it was so in England’s wars, and that

it was so in all our wars from the beginning ; that the expenditures rose to their height, of course, at the close of the war. Then they began to drop, drop, drop, and to slope down in an inclined plane, until they struck the new level of peace, where the rise began again, gradually, and that they struck it at a period twice as long after the war as the length of the war itself. Our war was substantially five years long, ending, financially, in 1866. Add ten years, and you get to 1876, and I said, "We shall reach our peace level then." I analyzed, showing what were our war expenses, and the expenses resulting from the war, and the expenses of peace, showing that the peace expenses would increase all the time, growing with the growth of the country, and the war expenses decrease. There were two processes ; but the war was so big that its decrease would be more rapid than the peace increase ; and by and by those two lines would meet, and the sloping incline of peace would come. I got a theory upon it, and ventured to present it, and time showed my theory to be correct.

I had served four years on the Committee on Appropriations when the Democrats came into power in the House. I was put, of course, into the minority, and almost immediately there arose the Jeff. Davis amnesty debate—whether Jeff. Davis should be amnestied with the rest. Blaine made a speech against it, and Ben Hill made a terrific onslaught upon Blaine. I followed, and replied to Hill. That reply made a good deal of impression on the country at that time. I suppose there were millions of those speeches circulated in the campaign that fall. Near the close of that session of Congress, Lamar, who is a very brilliant man, made a carefully prepared speech, showing why the Democratic party ought to be put in power at the next election, and arraigning the Republican party. That speech was delayed until within two or three days of the adjournment of Congress. The word was passed around, and it was understood among them that Lamar was going to make a speech which would be a great campaign speech, and was to deliver it so late that it could not be replied to. The moment he sat down I rose, and got the floor. It was late in the afternoon, and the House adjourned, but I had the right to the floor the next morning. His speech was withheld, and did not appear in the *Record*, so that I could not see the full speech. I heard it, and had taken notes, and there was a brief summary in the morning dispatches. I rose and delivered this speech of

August 4th, 1876, under the caption, "Can the Democratic party be safely intrusted with the administration of the Government?" I suppose on some accounts that is one of the best speeches I ever made. I think it had more effect, perhaps, on the country. It was made without much preparation. Of course, I worked pretty much all night in preparing the points. But that speech shows my feeling toward the South. I think one of generosity, and yet one of determined, stalwart Republicanism. I think you will find that speech one that you will want to quote largely from, and, perhaps, entire.

Then the electoral count came up. Now, it is said I went down to New Orleans as a "visiting statesman." I went down there, and when Mr. Potter afterwards came to make his investigation he found no fault whatever with me in his report. Nobody charged that I did or said any unjust or unfair thing. What I did was to examine very carefully the testimony in relation to the election in one parish, West Feliciana, and to write out a careful, brief, and judicial statement of the official testimony as to the conduct of the election there, and bring out my conclusions, which formed a part of the general report; but my report on West Feliciana was written separately. In it I analyze the Kuklux Rifle Club's movements in that parish, which broke up the election, and I confine myself to that; and I stand on everything I did there as being straight, and true, and fair, and I would stand by it any time.

When we got back and the electoral count came up, there was an effort made finally to make this Electoral Commission on the assumption that the Vice-President had not the right to count the vote, but that Congress had the right to count it. I made a speech on the electoral count January 25th, 1877, in which I took the ground that the Vice-President had the right under the Constitution to count the vote; that Congress was a usurper when it undertook to count it; that Congress was present only as a witness of a great solemn ceremony, but not as an actor; and I voted against the bill establishing the Electoral Commission, and this speech was leveled against it. I was opposed to it on principle.

Question.—"Was the Electoral Bill a suggestion of the Democrats?"

Answer.—Certainly, Henry B. Payne was one of the Com-



mittee. Well, I don't know as I should say it was a suggestion of the Democrats. It may have been suggested by McCreery, of Iowa. He was one of the Committee that got up the bill, but the Democrats joined heartily; came out and said it was a high patriotic thing to do. It afterwards turned out that they supposed they had got it fixed so that Judge Davis, who had really turned Democrat from being a Republican, would hold the casting vote. Payne afterwards admitted in a speech in Cleveland, that they never would have passed the Electoral Bill if they had supposed Judge Davis would not be on the Commission; but just as the Commission was about to be selected from the Supreme Court, Illinois elected Davis as Democratic Senator, and thereupon it became improper to choose him as a representative of the bench; and they put on the two out and out Democrats that were there, and the three other judges, and those three were Republicans. Well, the Lord came in, you know, just at the proper moment, and removed from the bench just the one man that the Democrats had relied on for the casting vote. Although I had voted against the Electoral Bill, and spoken against it, yet, when it was by common opinion decided that the Republicans should have two from the House, and the Democrats three, the Republicans met and unanimously chose me as the man to represent them; and then they chose Mr. Hoar. "Well, now," I said, "you have appointed me to serve in this capacity. I can serve on a committee, though I don't believe in its validity." And I did my duty on it. You will find in the volume that records the electoral count, the proceedings of the Commission, which you will find in the Astor Library, as part of the records of the *Globe*,—only in a separate volume. You will find there two opinions delivered by me in my capacity as Commissioner which you had better look over. You may want to print some of them.

Then, when Hayes came in, there was that tremendous row in our own party—division from Hayes. Then the attempt of the Potter Committee to investigate Hayes's title and to turn him out; and in that we had some fiery talking. In there came a speech on "Louisiana and Pacification."

I held the rôle then of trying to protect our party from splitting; and being the acknowledged leader of the House, I did it by keeping our people for six months from having a caucus, except to meet and choose officers, or something of that sort—from

having a sentimental caucus at all. I ought to say that as soon as Blaine left for the Senate, I was every time after that unanimously nominated for Speaker of the House by the Republicans and voted for by them. I was voted for three times as Speaker, once after Kerr died and Randall was elected for the short term, then when Randall was elected for the long term, and then for the second term.

The tendency of a part of our party to assail Hayes, and denounce him as a traitor, and a man who was going to Johnsonize the party, was very strong; and his defenders were comparatively few for a little while; but we agreed, a number of us, that we would prevent a row in the party by not having a caucus on any question; and we did not have one until Potter made his motion for an investigation of Hayes's title. That united the party almost immediately. Then we called a caucus denouncing the Potter investigation as revolutionary, and we worked harmoniously together, and you have seen how Hayes at last has been restored to the confidence of his party. My work as a pacificator of the party was very effective, and my speech on "Louisiana Affairs, and the Policy of Pacification," you will find here, dated February 19th, 1878.

Then, during the whole of 1878, came the resumption struggle, when the Democrats tried to repeal the law of resumption. About the last thing, you know, the Republicans did before they went out of power was to pass the resumption law—the law nearly four years in advance, so as to get ready for it. Of course, the Democrats said it could not be done. Speeches were delivered, essays were written, and reports were made, to show it could not be done. Tilden, in his letter of acceptance, had denounced the Republican party for not having accumulated a reserve of coin for resumption—as much as to say, "Put us into power, and we will resume." Then we passed the law, and got started on it. Then the Democrats denounced us for hoarding gold, and said we could not resume. When a man failed anywhere he was "Sherman's victim,"—"the victim of the Republican party." The papers were full of it. Those terrible times fell upon us; and during the whole of the time they continued to denounce us as the cause of their woe. During all that time I stood up and made no concession anywhere.

Then came the silver fight with all its ferocity, and in a circle

of nine States around Ohio and including Ohio, I was the only man on either side that voted against the silver bill. All the rest were for trying unlimited silver. I was not opposed to silver, only I wanted it silver that would be equal in value with gold, so that every dollar should be equal before the law. We reached it finally by modification—not unlimited silver, but keeping within limits of so much a month; and we thus, by having the limitation put on, saved it from utter ruin.

Then came the extra session, and the fight against the election law. You have my volume of speeches on the election law. These are pretty full, and explain themselves. Probably the most effective speeches I have made are there.

Then, on the tariff, there is a speech delivered in March, 1878, that you have not here. That is my fullest speech on the tariff. I went into Congress from an iron district. There are nineteen iron furnaces in my district and a great many rolling mills. My studies led me to believe that, as a mere matter of abstract theory, the doctrine of free trade was the true doctrine; but that, in a country situated as ours is, free trade was not the thing that could practically work at all, only as we came up to it, through a long series of protections. until, one by one, the various articles of manufacture were so on their feet that they could be liberated and stand the strain alone. In 1866 I made a speech, which you will find in the *Record*, and from which I quote in some of my other speeches, taking the position that I was in favor of that sort of protection that would ultimately lead to liberating, one by one, the articles of free trade; that I was opposed to prohibitory protection, but was in favor of a tariff high enough for our people fairly to compete and keep the national industries alive, but not so high as to enable the manufacturers to combine and monopolize prices and have no competition from abroad. On that doctrine I launched myself. That doctrine was not satisfactory to the free traders, because they wanted free trade right along, nor was it satisfactory to the extreme protectionists, because they wanted to make just as much money as they could by having the highest possible tariff, and having a monopoly of the business. I was, therefore, denounced by the extreme protectionists as a free trader, and by the free traders as a sort of protectionist. It is the only position in my life where I have stood in the middle between two extremes. I have usually been at one pole or the other. There I

stood on the equator, and there insisted that the true doctrine was the point of stable equilibrium, where you could hold a tariff that would not be knocked down every time the free traders got into power and boosted up when the protectionists got into power, but to give the country a stable policy, where the tendency would be toward amelioration all the while. I have held that equitable ground all through, and held it against assaults, now from one side, now from the other, and I esteem it one of the greatest of my achievements in statesmanship to have held that equipoise. You will find the theory of it fully summed up in the speech delivered in March, 1878, covering the whole subject. There is a speech here, made in 1870, on the tariff. The historical part of it is the best thing of its kind I have ever done ; that is, the part where I state the policy of England toward the United States, which led to the Revolution, showing how they had made us to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, mere subjects and labor operatives for England. That part of it you will do very well to draw on.